8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

Pietru Lagrimanti's strange birth has a parallel in Egyptian mythology, where a man is born of the tears of the deity Nu who personified the Celestial Ocean from which the life-force even of the gods themselves was drawn. 539 / 71

Armed with his great hammer, "Il Lagrimanti" resembles the Dragon Slayers of every mythology, from Bel-Marduk of the Assyrians to Thor of the Scandinavians and Finn M'Cull of the Celts; but he is sadly fallen from his high estate and become a figure of fun, with his huge head and his shirt too long for him. A primitive respect for deformity or else some modification of the monstrous shapes of a pagan Pantheon may account for the baby's misshapen figure. The long shirt has clearly been added to provide a comic figure of the sort dear to the Maltese sense of the ridiculous.

The stories of the Kaukam and of Pietru Lagrimanti are but two of many tales in which pursuit of the Old Things, through the labyrinth which time has built around them, is a fascinating pastime. Enough has been said to illustrate the way in which a tenacious handful of peasants has handed down, through the centuries, legends of great antiquity—in some cases nearly intact. 539

GROWN UP

The Maltese—a people as old as time—are a people who never grow up. In this lies their chief charm. For Zeppu the passing of childhood means only an understanding of the ancient price of manhood: 885 ●

> "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken. . . ."

For Grez the flowering into womanhood brings only the divine command:

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

885

"In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children and thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee. . . ."

In all other things they remain children and "of such is the Kingdom. . . ."

So that the curse of Adam may lie less heavily upon these children of an unfertile rock, the Old Things have blessed them with an uncanny ability to make flowering fields out of nothing.[1]

THE SKY AND THE SOIL

821
171
[369]

The weather and husbandry lore of the peasant has much to do with the success of his untiring hands. Much of this peasant wisdom is incomprehensible to the town-bred Maltese (too often they have lost touch or dismiss it—in hybrid Italian—as *ignuranza*); much of it has exact parallels in the lore of the English countryside, as for example the following:

Maltese	*English*
821 171 539 "The Moon eats everything."	"Fair weather with a full moon."
"The stars wink at the coming wind."	"Twinkling stars foretell high winds."
"Sky like a turtle's back; heavy rains, fierce winds."	"A rounded cloud with flattened base carries rainfall in its face."
"Clouds with heads of men and beasts bring in the thunder and the lightning."	

[248]

[1] During the early years of the last century Malta's cotton crop was valued at an average of one and a half millions sterling annually. The cotton industry, dating from Roman times and earlier, is now practically dead.